Video Games: Access, Archives, and Values
INF 385T Unique: 27304
W 6-9 pm UTA 1.504

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2-6 or by appointment

I. Course Description

Video games are cultural heritage artifacts that are increasingly more common in the everyday world and hold large amounts of societal information and research value within them. Because of this archivists and librarians are having to deal with the challenges of how to properly provide access to and preserve video games. Topics include: virtualization, emulation, copyright, DRM, providing access, research values, and more.

Although this course uses video games as the lens through which to learn about access, archives, and research values, it also examines preservation, access, research values in other media, including film, video, music, pop culture, etc. I believe that anyone interested in working in libraries or archives will gain a great deal of knowledge on providing access, preservation, and finding research values in cultural heritage artifacts in the class.

II. Course Aim and Objectives

In this class you will

- gain knowledge about preservation of born-digital media and its best practices
- be able to find research values in media and create access strategies to best facilitate research centered in those values
- introduce students to the legal, moral, and ethical concerns in archiving born-digital media collections
- make a compelling case for why video games and media in general are important tools for cultivating creativity and learning in communities

III. Disclaimer

This syllabus is subject to change at any time.

VI. Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Discussion Topic	In-Class Exercise	Assignment Due
1	Intro/Media Formats		
2	Societal Importance of Video Games/Video games as cultural heritage artifacts		
3	Emulation vs. Virtualization	Play games using each and compare the experience (I will be providing the games in class)	Homework 1
4	Modernizing: Ports, Remasters, and Remakes (Differences and why they matter)		
5	Issues in Preservation/Providing Access/Metadata	Bring in a controversy	Homework 2
6	Software and non-software based DRM/Copyright/Ethics		
7	Research Aspects/Values		Homework 3
8	Fandoms/Fan Culture	Bring in something with an interesting fandom	Proposal/ Bibliography
9	Games and Development Documentation (Development History)	Bring in something with an interesting development history	
10	Representation in Media	Bring in something that shows representation in some form	Draft
11	Source code and MODS	Bring in something with an interesting source code history or an interesting MOD	
12	Surrounding Media: Multimedia Projects/Transmedia Narrative	Bring in something with a transmedia narrative element	

13	TBD		
14	NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING		
15	"Presentations"/Reflect on course		Final Paper

V. Course Requirements

- Class readings (Schedule)
  Weekly readings all readings will be posted on canvas, students are required to have read all weekly readings before coming to class as this class centers heavily on discussion.

- Participation
  All students are expected to attend every class. Attendance will be taken. What you get out of this course will be greatly impacted by your participation therefore it is important that you not only attend class but participate in class discussions.

  Each week one student will take on the role of discussion leader, each student will be required to take on this role once during the semester. When acting in this role, you will be (as the title implies) leading discussion.

  During the second half of the semester the course will become less reading heavy and more centered around discussion. Students will be asked to interact more with media and bring examples to class. Therefore, class participation will be more important during the second half of the semester, given the discussion heavy nature.

- Homework
  You will write 3 different 1000 word responses to any of the following topics. You will be able to choose which ones you would like to write about. You are more than welcome to write about a topic not covered on this list, in fact I am more than happy if you come up with your own topic to write about however if you do come up with your own topic I do ask that you talk to me about it first so I can make sure it is still in the scope of the course.

  You are also welcome to use these homework assignments to "test drive" your final paper topic if you wish.

Topics:
- ○ Look at some of the finding aids from the Video Game Archive at the Briscoe Center for American History and write about if you think they accurately portray the research value of the collection(s) or if you are even able to see a research value based off the finding aids.
- ○ Write about a controversy in video gaming and explain why/how you think we should or should not preserve the debate. (Do not write about Gamergate.)
- ○ Play or research any video game and write about the potential issues that will/could/have come up when preserving the game. (MMOs and online/server based games are good starting points.)
- ○ Look into other archives or institutions that have and maintain pop culture collections and interview an archivist that works with that collection or collections about any specific challenges that are present for those collections.
- ○ Read a book about video game history (I can provide you with some ideas) and write a review while answering this question: does this book portray video games as cultural heritage objects with prolonged research value?

- ● Final project in 3 parts: Proposal/Bibliography, Draft, Final Draft
  You will choose between either writing a research paper or lit review, doing some form of hands-on project, or creating an access and preservation strategy based off a scenario that I'll provide to you. Papers should be a minimum of 8 typed pages (double-spaced, not including bibliography).

VI. Grading Procedures
Attendance and Participation: 10%
Homework: 45%
Final Project: 45%